

Forrester General Store
Southwest corner, Hudson and Main streets
Plains
Sumter County
Georgia

HABS No. GA-2214

HABS
GA,
131-PLAIN,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FORRESTER GENERAL STORE

HABS No. GA-2214

Location: Southwest Corner of Hudson and Main streets, Plains, Sumter County, Georgia.

USGS Plains Georgia Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 16, E 746200 N 3546900.

Present Owner: Frank and Albert Williams.

Present Occupant: Bonnie and Gene's Hairstyling.

Present Use: The building has been divided into two sections; the front is vacant but is used occasionally for flea markets; the rear space houses a beauty salon.

Significance: The buildings in this business block were erected between 1896-1916 as brick was used to gradually replace the original wood-frame structures. Situated southwest of the Plains Depot, this block was a business hub for the region before the Depression. In the 1920s, James Earl Carter, Jimmy Carter's father ran a grocery and meat market in this store which he closed when the family moved to the farm in Archery.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1902.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a chain of title to the property. Deeds are from the Clerk's Office, Sumter County Courthouse, Americus, Georgia.
 - 1902 Deed July 1902, recorded August 1, 1902, Deed Book FF, pages 20-21. J.E. French sold the lot to W.L. Thomas for \$50.
 - 1938 Deed July 26, 1938, recorded July 26, 1938, Deed Book 22, page 149. W.L. Thomas sold a 44' x 100' lot with two one-story brick buildings to Lillian Bowers for \$2,611.29.
 - 1938 Deed August 4, 1938, recorded August 9, 1938 Deed Book 22, page 156. Lillian F. Bowers sold the 44' x 100' lot to F.F. Timmerman and O.A. Williams for \$1,000.
 - 1941 Deed January 10, 1941, recorded January 10, 1941, Deed Book 26, page 13. Ida Lee Timmerman sold "A certain lot with two

one-story buildings" to O.A. Williams for \$3,000.

1952 Deeds January 1, 1952, recorded February 28, 1952, Deed Book 40, pages 499-500. O.A. Williams sold one-third of his interest in the building to son Frank Williams and another third to son Albert Williams.

3. Original plans and construction: None have been located.
4. Alterations and additions: In the 1950s, a sprinkler system purchased from the local Jones Sprinkler Company was installed in this building, the adjacent warehouse on the west, and the rear warehouse.

B. Historical Context: This structure was purchased and constructed by W.L. Thomas, a prominent Plains citizen and cashier of the Plains Bank. In addition to banking and owning several buildings in Plains, Thomas is listed in a 1909-10 business directory as selling fire insurance, wood and coal. Thomas initially rented this structure to the W.H. Forrester and Company which is also listed in the 1909-10 directory as a general merchandiser.¹ In addition to running the store, Forrester also served as city clerk.² In 1919, Jimmy Carter's father, Earl Carter, ran a grocery store in the building with a meat market run by Will Kennedy. When the Depression struck, Carter waited until he had just \$500 remaining in the bank, before he moved the family out to a farm three miles west of Plains in Archery. Much of the merchandise from the in-town store was then transferred to the commissary located next to the Boyhood Home in Archery (see HABS No. GA-245 and GA-245-A).³

Oscar Williams and Frank Timmerman, partners in the Plains Cotton Warehouse business, owned a large warehouse behind this building, and in 1938 they purchased it and the adjacent one-story brick building on the west to expand the business. After Timmerman died in 1936, his wife retained half ownership until 1941. When these two were in use for cotton storage, bales were brought in by forklift and stacked on wood platforms. When Oscar Williams added a sprinkler system in the 1950s, he greatly reduced his insurance costs. With the advent of the peanut as the major crop in Plains, the need for cotton storage decreased and the warehouses been vacant. In 1952, Oscar Williams Sr. made partners of his sons, Oscar Albert Jr. and George Frank. Oscar Williams Sr. died in 1976 but his sons continue to work in the warehouse behind the two Main Street buildings, dealing mostly in seeds and

¹ Young and Co.'s Business Directory, 1909-10, p. 499.

² Beth Walters, History of Plains, Georgia 1885-1985, 1985.

³ Gloria Carter Spann, 1989 interview.

fertilizers.⁴ The Forrester General Store Building is now vacant, although it is used on occasion for flea markets and craft sales. The back of the building is rented to Bonnie and Gene's Hairstyling Salon, where Jimmy Carter has his hair cut when he is in town.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Although this storefront building is small it has an ornamental facade with decorative brickwork.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair; bricks are deteriorated and the mortar is eroded.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This one-story rectangular structure has a 21'-0", three-bay north facade. The east facade, about 90', has one opening on the south end; the back/south facade has two bays.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: Seven-course American-bond brick. The west wall is shared with the adjacent building. The front facade features decorative brickwork, including a frieze formed by a row of brick mousetoothing, corbelling and dentils above a recessed panel with a diamond vent.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing brick.
5. Porches: A corrugated-metal shed roof runs the length of the facade and across that of the building to the west. It is supported on chamfered wood posts set in battered concrete pedestals.
6. Chimneys: A brick flue on the east parapet served a wood- or coal-burning stove.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The central entrance features double wood doors with two lights and one panel each. Above the entrance is a round arch made up of a three courses of rowlocks, the middle and uppermost courses projecting. Under this arch and above the

⁴ Frank Williams, 1989 interview.

doors is a semicircular fanlight divided into four lights by three vertical muntins.

The entrance on the south end of the east facade is similar, except the double door has been replaced by a single eight-panel door with a screen. The doorway on the rear/south facade appears to have been a double door for loading, but it has been boarded up. Above the back entrance is a segmental arch composed of two rowlock courses surmounted by two rows of headers.

- b. Windows: The flanking four-light, double-hung sash on the north/front facade are topped by transom and arch surrounds identical to that over the door. A single four-over-four-light double-hung sash in the first bay of the south facade is covered with heavy metal bars and topped by an arch identical to the adjacent door. All windows have rowlock sills with concrete coping.
8. Roof: The flat rectangular roof slopes slightly downward at the rear, and it has parapets.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: Historically the interior was an unpartitioned rectangular space about 20' wide and 98' deep. A wall partitioned off the rear one-third of the space where the beauty salon is located.
- 2. Flooring: Concrete slab.
- 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Approximately 1" of plaster covers the brick walls. The ceilings are narrow, beaded tongue-and-groove panels.
- 4. Decorative features and trim: An approximately 4' high chair rail surrounds the interior. The door and window casings are ornamented with corner blocks.
- 5. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Historically, the building was heated by a coal- or wood-burning stove; currently there is no heat or air conditioning.
 - b. Lighting: Fluorescent light fixtures run north to south on the ceiling.
 - c. Plumbing: There are no bathrooms in the front section of the

warehouse. A Jones Sprinkler System was installed in the 1950s.

- D. Site: The building faces north onto Main Street and is the easternmost in a row of eight commercial buildings. The wide sidewalk covered by a canopy across the length of the business block bends around the corner and along the east side of this structure.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: None have been located.

- B. Early Views: A ca. 1905 photograph of Main Street has been made into a postcard for sale in Hugh Carter's Antique Store, Plains, Georgia.

- C. Interviews:

Frank Williams, current owner, interview by Elizabeth Barthold, July 26, 1989, Plains, Georgia.

Gloria Carter Spann, interviews by Elizabeth Barthold July 26, and August 23, 1989, Plains, Georgia.

Ruth Godwin, long time resident of Plains, interview by Elizabeth Barthold, July 26, 1989, Plains, Georgia.

- D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed Books, Clerk's Office, Sumter County Courthouse, Americus, Georgia.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Walters, Beth M. History of Plains, Georgia: 1885 - 1985, 1985.

Young and Co.'s Business and Professional Directory 1909-1910 Atlanta, p. 499.

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